



AN ROINN TALMHAIOCHTA AGUS IASCAIGH
(Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)

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IRISH MUSSEL FISHERY

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The Irish Mussel Fishery 1971-72Introduction

Since 1966 the landings of mussels in Ireland have increased significantly and the relevant statistics are given in Table I.

TABLE I

Year	Total landings in tons	Total Value £	Average price £ per ton	Percentage of catch processed
1966	756	7,617	10.08	50
1967	1,163	12,571	10.81	49
1968	2,393	25,183	10.52	44
1969	2,634	31,875	12.10	39
1970	3,319	42,460	12.75	56
1971	4,628	60,067	12.98	68

Almost all the mussels landed are exported either in the processed form or live in the shell to Britain and the continent; only a small quantity (a few cwt.) of live mussels in the shell are sold weekly during the season in Dublin. The price of such mussels averages about 7½p per pound. The amount of mussels consumed in the remainder of the country is negligible.

In order to provide information for fishermen, merchants and processors examinations were carried out during the season on mussels from the principal mussel fisheries i.e. Cromane, Youghal, Wexford, Mornington, Dundalk and Omeath. Each sample was analysed for 5 different factors namely:

1. Size range
2. Number per kilogramme
3. Percentage "meat"
4. Percentage shell
5. Percentage "loss".

It was not possible to get monthly samples from each area.

Results

1. Size range. The length distributions in 5 mm groups of each sample from the different fishery areas are indicated in Table 2. Only mussels above 50 mm were examined. There were a few mussels in the 50-55mm groups, the dominant groups being from 56 to 70 mm in size.
2. Number per kilogramme. The number of mussels per kg. are given in Table 3. There is a wide variation in the number per kg. as between the various areas and in the different months, roughly adversely proportional to the length composition.
3. Percentage "Meat". This was obtained by boiling a sample of mussel and weighing the meats after removal of the byssus threads, Table 4. Again there was a wide variation in meat yields. For example in Wexford the meat yields were consistently over 21.5% whereas at Mornington the yield varied from 11.5% to 18.4%.
4. Percentage shell. The percentage shell by weight is also indicated in Table 4. The high figure for April for Mornington (60%) was due no doubt to the fact that a high percentage (57%) of the mussels was in the 70-80 mm groups.
5. Percentage "loss". This factor, estimated by subtracting the percentages of meat and shell from 100, indicates the quality of the mussels, a low figure denoting a high quality. Again the Wexford loss was consistently low.

Table 2. Mussel length in 5 mm groups expressed in percentages.

Cromane

Month	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Oct.	1	2	11	31	33	15	7
Nov.	5	17	31	34	9	4	-
Dec.	6	14	30	30	20	-	-
Jan.	3	9	34	24	26	4	-
Feb.	4	21	40	20	10	4	1
Mar.	-	33	45	16	6	-	-
April							

Youghal

8	8	42	19	15	6	2	
18	43	33	6	-	-	-	
-	8	34	45	13	-	-	
-	10	40	35	15	-	-	

Wexford

Oct.	1	2	11	31	33	15	7
Nov.	7	17	32	24	12	8	-
Dec.	6	18	34	30	11	9	-
Jan.	-	6	14	21	36	18	5
Feb.	5	9	16	35	20	11	4
Mar.	-	-	8	15	23	30	24
April	1	3	12	74	8	2	-

Mornington

-	16	12	24	30	16	12	
1	8	18	23	25	14	11	
-	17	39	24	15	5	-	
-	3	8	32	28	20	9	

Dundalk

Oct.							
Nov.	4	16	20	32	27	1	-
Dec.							
Jan.							
Feb.							
Mar.	1	9	27	34	21	8	-
April	6	30	28	14	18	4	-

Omeath

-	10	27	39	20	3	1	

Table 3. Average Number of Mussels per kg.

Month	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April
Cromane	30.0	29.5	35.0	33.5	37.5	33	-
Youghal	-	-	32.5	34.5	-	36	30
Wexford	24.5	35.0	34.0	30.0	31.0	20	27.5
Mornington	-	24.0	-	27.0	29.5	-	23.5
Dundalk	-	24.5	-	-	-	22.5	28.0
Omeath	-	-	30.5	-	-	-	-

Table 4. Average monthly yields (%)

A Meat.

Location	Oct.,	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April
Cromane	16.5	14.8	19.0	15.0	12.8	13.7	-
Youghal	-	-	14.0	11.4	-	12.0	15.5
Wexford	27.5	30.9	27.0	22.5	24.3	26.0	21.5
Mornington	-	15.8	-	18.4	17.0	-	11.5
Dundalk	-	17.0	-	-	-	13.9	14.0
Omeath	-	-	16.3	-	-	-	-

B Shell.

Cromane	48.1	47.8	53.0	49.0	50.3	49.0	-
Youghal	-	-	58.5	48.8	-	51.5	46.5
Wexford	48.0	45.0	48.0	47.8	48.3	43.7	47.5
Mornington	-	47.0	-	43.7	42.8	-	60.0
Dundalk	-	54.0	-	-	-	54.6	44.5
Omeath	-	-	41.0	-	-	-	-

C Loss.

Cromane	35.4	37.4	28.0	36.0	36.9	37.3	-
Youghal	-	-	27.5	39.8	-	36.5	38.0
Wexford	24.5	24.1	25.0	29.7	27.4	30.3	31.0
Mornington	-	37.2	-	37.9	40.2	-	28.5
Dundalk	-	29.0	-	-	-	31.5	41.5
Omeath	-	-	42.7	-	-	-	-